

Last Thursday, the White House confirmed it is mothballing its Jobs Council which met just four times since its creation more than two years ago. The move raised eyebrows around Washington for its tone deafness at a time of continued high unemployment.

This decision, unfortunately, further reflects the Obama administration's growing inattention to Americans' number one concern – the economy.

On Friday, the Labor Department announced the national unemployment rate rose to 7.9 percent. If you add in those who've simply given up looking for work and therefore not counted in the government's monthly jobless totals, the national unemployment rate is above 11 percent -- hardly a successful track record.

Last week's White House decision to shutter the Jobs Council came just one day after the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that the nation's economy shrank by 0.1 percent in the last three months of 2012. The Commerce Department noted the drop was the first since 2009. This slowdown in the economy also came on the heels of the third straight decline in consumer confidence to the lowest level in 14 months.

As I mentioned in last week's column, I was disappointed the president gave only brief attention during his second inaugural address to economic growth and job creation. Instead, he largely focused on social issues and political goals for the next four years. In reality, people are hurting, and now is certainly not the time to scale back the effort to create jobs.

Putting Americans back to work admittedly takes time. Yet, the House of Representatives has presented the president and his supporters in the Senate with many opportunities to help jump start economic growth.

Over the last two years, the House has passed more than 30 separate bills to spur job growth and regrettably, each has been ignored by the Senate. We've also taken concrete steps to write and pass federal budget frameworks that lower government spending to reduce our deficit and restore confidence in the economy. Again, each time the House has passed a responsible budget the Senate has failed to act in kind.

It is not enough to point fingers and rehash old disagreements. Hardworking American taxpayers want the House and Senate to pass a responsible federal budget that puts the government on a path to living within its means.

I am pleased to report the Senate last week passed the "No Budget, No Pay Act," which the House approved the week before. The "No Budget, No Pay Act" requires each chamber of Congress – the House and the Senate – to pass a budget before tax day, and if they fail to do so, their pay will be withheld.

The "No Budget, No Pay Act" is supported by over 70 percent of Americans according to a recent Harper Polling survey. It has been four years since the Senate passed a budget while Republicans in the House have passed a budget each of the two years we have been in the majority. Congress cannot do its job if one half of the Capitol sits on the sidelines.

The Senate's approval of the "No Budget, No Pay Act" is admittedly only one step – but a step forward in the process of getting government spending under control and working toward a balanced budget.

Committee Assignments in New Congress:

As you know, I was sworn in as a Member of the 113th Congress on January 15, 2013. It is an honor to work for you for another two years in the U.S. House.

For the new Congress, I am making some changes in my committee assignments in line with my term of service and continued seniority to best represent the people of the First Congressional District.

After having served six years on the House Ethics Committee, including two years as Ranking Member and two years as Chairman, I have passed the gavel on to a new chairman this Congress. The typical term of service on the Ethics Committee is six years.

Meanwhile, I will continue to serve on the House Appropriations Committee during the new Congress. The Appropriations Committee oversees the discretionary budgets of all federal agencies and offers a unique opportunity for oversight over government spending.

For the new term, I will serve as vice chairman of the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies subcommittee, and as a member of the Defense and Financial Services subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee – each important to Southwest Alabama.

My staff and I work for you. If I can ever be of service, please do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

For release: February 4, 2013